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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**DATE: Wednesday, November 24, 2010**

**PARTICIPANTS INTRODUCED TO FAMILY GROUP DECISION MAKING**

WINDOW ROCK—More than 100 participants took the opportunity to learn about Family Group Decision Making during an information session at the Navajo Nation Museum on Nov. 8, 2010.

The participants included peacemakers, probation officers, school counselors, residential assistants, parent educators, Behavioral Health prevention specialists, public information officers, teachers, case management specialists, chapter officials, security guards, social workers, students and community members.

Stephanie Autumn, director of the EDC Tribal Youth T/TA Center, gave an introduction to the history and principles of the technique. Autumn also offered to return if there was enough interest to continue learning about the aspects of Family Group Decision Making.

Family Group Decision Making is a restorative form of justice and has been successfully implemented in many parts of the world including New Zealand, Australia and the United States. Restorative practices are alternative responses to crime or misconduct and bring together those who are involved in conflicts in a way that help people to address the harms, assume responsibility and work things out, Ms. Autumn said during her presentation. Restorative practices also generate levels of personal change for those involved.

Family Group Decision Making is similar to peacemaking. The technique involves the family members as participants who actively seek solutions. It also involves identifying a family's strengths that can be used in problem-solving. Ms. Autumn said that in family group conferencing, participants begin with agreements. There is also a concept of freedom of choice in family group conferencing which enables participants to become engaged in the process.

Participants identified current issues for youth today, such as bullying and suicide, where new techniques can be explored.

The information session was designed to give participants an idea of what Family Group Decision Making involves, said Jay C. McCray, traditional researcher with the Peacemaking Program. Many people became interested in learning more and want to sign up for further instruction, he added. Further training for Judicial Branch staff and others will take place in

December.

Peacemaking is encouraging other programs such as the Division of Social Services and Probation and Parole Services to learn about Family Group Decision Making as a collaborative way to help Navajo families in need to focus on helping them resolve their own problems rather than depending on outside resources.

For more information, contact the Peacemaking Program at (928) 871-6388.

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